

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH MAJOR GENERAL ALESSANDRO POMPEGNANI, ITALIAN ARMY, DEPUTY COMMANDER OF NATO TRAINING MISSION-IRAQ, VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ TIME: 9:30 A.M. EDT DATE: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

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CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, OASD PA): Okay, Colonel Imms (sp), if the general is ready, we'd like to welcome him onto the bloggers roundtable this morning.

COL. IMMS (SP): Roger. I'll give a quick introduction. General Pompegnani is the NATO Training Training Mission-Iraq commander, and their mission is unique and it's tied directly to the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. And their unique mission is that they have training that they are doing with the Iraqi national police. And General Pompegnani is ready to talk about how they're going to support that mission as they move forward with carabinieri training. And then he'll take your questions and hopefully answer everything that you've got questions about.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to General Pompegnani. Sir? GEN. POMPEGNANI: Good morning, you all. Welcome, and thank you for joining us here today. I will start by giving you a short briefing on what the NATO Training Mission in Iraq does. And then I will expand on one of our newer projects, which is providing the Iraqi national police with the gendarme-type training focusing on leadership and management skills. This training will be carried out by the Italian Carabinieri.

Let me start by introducing the NATO Training Mission in Iraq, which from now on I'll mention as NTMI. The mission was founded in 2004 to assist the Iraqis in establishing an effective and enduring security sector. This has mainly been done throughout three means: by training, advising and mentoring in-country; by organizing out-of-country training at NATO establishments in various countries; and by coordinating equipment donations. The mission initially focused primarily on the training, and over the last year progressed towards advising and recently to mentoring, helping the Iraqis establish well-rounded, self-sufficient institutions in-country.

NTMI has also developed a smooth and effective process in coordinating out-of-country training and equipment donations to ensure that the equipment and training provided accurately meets the Iraqis' needs. Other projects include assisting the Iraqi armed forces in (setting up ?) a strong and effective -- (off mike) -- gendarme-type training for the Iraqi national police I will expand further on shortly.

In addition, NTMI engages in various reachback projects. Specially trained teams are brought into theater for a limited amount of time for the purpose of developing a certain skill set. Although NTMI's (focus is in ?) not expanding, NATO's mission in Iraqi is developing to include new activities, other projects (mature ?).

The most significant of these new activities is gendarme-type training. In Carabinieri, we provide the Iraqi national police. The reason why we are now offering this training is because in 2006 -- (off mike) -- al-Maliki, prime minister of Iraq, requested NATO's assistance. Having seen how the NATO training mission in Iraq had helped build up training institutions for the Iraqi armed forces, he requested that these be expanded to include the training for the Iraqi national police. This is NATO's response to that request.

The Iraqi authorities have also taken to decision -- (inaudible) -- the Iraqi national police with the multinational specialized unit, which certainly many of you will also recognize as MSU, more than which is based in Carabinieri experience.

The system of the Italian Carabinieri is based on over 150 years of international years of international experience. They have trained police in emerging democracies in the Balkans and in Africa, and this is not the first time that the Carabinieri have trained the Iraqi police either, as they trained the Iraqi police service at the regional police level at Nasiriyah from 2004/2006.

The training will build on the very (effective ?) training that the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, the so-called CPATT, already provides -- (off mike) -- since 2004. It is not intended to replace (that ?) training in any way. It is a specialization that -- (inaudible).

To give you a basic outline of what the NTMI Carabinieri are going to do here, this is a two-year plan to train the leadership of the Iraqi national police and guide them toward professionalism as a robust police force. We aim to train the corps out of eight battalions of national police at Camp Dublin, close to the Baghdad International Airport. Each course will be two months of intensive training.

Camp Dublin is currently being refurbished in order to house the training. The necessary equipment is being procured. When the training starts, there will be a total of around 40 Carabinieri in training and support roles at Camp Dublin. The training will focus mainly on counterinsurgency methods to help the Iraqi national police fight the terrorism that national police officers daily face.

The national police officer will also be trained in forensic investigation. (Off mike) -- methods to examine bomb scenarios and other crime scenarios. These officers will also be trained to face riot situation and crowd control operation. This training will focus on mid-to-senior-level officers, and it provides an important opportunity for the national police to modernize and streamline the leadership standard.

The NATO training mission in Iraq has had success in helping build up leadership training for the Iraqi armed forces. (Off mike) -- Iraqi national police -- (off mike). Right now there are 10 carabinieri -- (off mike). The team has been working with Iraqi national police authorities to adapt the training methods of the carabinieri to the needs of the Iraqis.

The program of this structure is now being approved by the minister of the interior and the Iraqi national police authorities. The conditions of the streets of Iraqi towns and cities are quite different from most places in Europe. But the professional methods of the carabinieri, which have proven in over 100 countries of the world, will certainly be very useable for the Iraqi special police as well.

Mr. Jack, that's all I have. Back to you.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir, thank you very much, Major General Alessandro Pompegnani from the Italian Carabinieri, speaking with us on the Bloggers Roundtable today.

Andrew Lubin, you were first online, so why don't you get us started?

Q Great.

General, good afternoon. This is Andrew Lubin from U.S. Cavalry ON Point. I would like to thank you for taking the time to speak with us this afternoon.

Sir, two weeks ago, General James Jones, the former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and the former commandant of the Marine Corps, referred to the Iraqi national police as, I'm paraphrasing, incompetent, sectarian, corrupt, and should be disbanded. Are you getting -- that's a bit of a disconnect between what I'm reading on your website and you're telling us, versus what General Jones sees in the field. Can you tell us what's happened to the Iraqi national police that would make him talk like that? GEN. POMPEGNANI: Good afternoon. Good afternoon to you.

I met General Jones, had the privilege to serve when he was the SACEUR and I was appointed in NATO headquarter up there. I know his position about the current situation of the military police. But what we have to do as NATO -- we believe that we -- we strongly believe that gendarme-type training can help the Iraqi national police, just for creating the right mentality.

We should push in the mindset of these people also, of course, the training, which is an important part. And we certain that the mindset, the mentality, the value of the carabinieri will be much more helpful for them to change drastically mentality in creating a national, Iraqi national police, as the operation is expecting from them.

It's enough, my answer, for you?

Q Yes, it is. Thank you very much, sir.

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right. Jarred. Jarred Fishman.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you for taking your time and energy, General. Could you speak a little bit to the attempts to instill more professionalism into both the officers and the enlisted men, and how you feel the Carabinieri will be able to accomplish that task?

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Yes. Thank you for your question -- (inaudible). It's something that I already mentioned. The Carabinieri are much more confident that because they are used to train and to create and build and build up professionalism, we are certain that with -- of course, three months, of course, as I mentioned during my short presentation, will be certainly not enough to create a sort of, let me say, Iraqi Carabinieri, but certainly we can create a sort of policeman, very well trained, and those of the population should believe on the new shape of these own police because this kind of police will be trained in a way in which they never have been in the past. And this is also a way to create the professionalism, which is the -- (audio break). (Pause.)

MR. HOLT: General Pompegnani. (Pause.) I believe we've lost the call. It looks like we may have --

Q I think it's Jarred's fault. He asked a question about professionalism in Iraq, and they all got off the line.

MR. HOLT: Well, I think we just -- I think we've -- let's see if they come back on. (Pause.) And I believe we've lost Charlie Quidnunc also. (Pause.) Okay, we'll give them a few more minutes, see if they dial back in. (Pause.)

(Beep on the line.) And this is Jack. Okay, did somebody else drop off?

Q I'm still here. I think Jarred's still here.

Q Yeah. MR. HOLT: Okay. All right.

Q Hey, Jarred, I've got an article for you for tomorrow, really makes a good news report. I'm waiting for some pictures out of Ramadi, and I've got a great story for you. (Pause.)

MR. HOLT: (Beep on the line.) And this is Jack. Who's joining us?

COL. WILLIAMS: Jack, this is Lieutenant Colonel Williams. Sorry. We're in Iraq, so bear with us. Electricity went out and so did the phone. We're back on.

MR. HOLT: All right. Yeah, okay. I kind of figured something like that might have been the case.

COL. WILLIAMS: Roger.

MR. HOLT: Okay. So we can continue, sir, with your response.

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Well, I was at the end. Sorry for the inconvenience. We are in Iraq.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Not a problem. But we were speaking on the training and the accomplishment of the training with the leadership training, and you were speaking on the new shape of the professional police force.

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Yes, because -- if I can add something that I didn't before -- because the professionalism comes now also from the specialization

that the Carabinieri will provide the new Iraqi forces, new Iraqi National Police. This is something that before I didn't say, probably.

MR. HOLT: Okay, sir. And that is also transferring -- that's also part of the NCO training?

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Say again? Say again the last part of your sentence. It was disturbed.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And that's also included in the NCO training as well, the specialization.

Q Yes, of course. Yes, of course. Yes, of course, included in the NCO training. Yes.

MR. HOLT: All right.

Q When we are talking about the leadership, the leadership is addressed to all the different, I would say, ranks or functions that they have to show on (day long ?) new job.

MR. HOLT: All right, excellent, sir. Do we have any follow-up questions?

Q Yes, I'd like to ask about the NCO training. General, I've spent a fair amount of time in Iraq and I'm very impressed by some of the senior officers.

Sorry, this Andrew Lubin from ON Point again.

I'm very impressed by some of the senior officers and extremely impressed by some of the young enlisted men. But the NCOs, the staff NCOs seem to have a lot to be desired. Is there a specific program -- or can you talk about a specific program to bring these -- to bring the NCOs up to speed?

COL. WILLIAMS: This is Colonel Williams. The course that I mentioned in my intro to you all is actually for the Navy and not the Carabinieri. We're going to concentrate on the Carabinieri. So that's my fault for leading you down the wrong path on that one. But we do plan on rejoining this group and talking about that at a separate time.

Q Real quick question. About how much of a total percentage of the force will be granted the training? And also, will some of the more elite leaders actually be able to go to Italy and receive even more follow-on training?

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Okay. The 75 percent of the leadership, of the entire leadership during the time -- the entire time that we (have sourcing ?) for the course. This is entirely in country, 75 percent, entirely in country.

Q (Inaudible) -- another question?.

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Is it enough as an answer? MR. HOLT: Okay, all right. Yeah, Andrew, go ahead.

Q Okay, General, Andrew Lubin again. I'm looking at your website, I see you've got 26 countries in NATO listed. Are these still -- but everything

seems to go back to 2005 or so. Are all the countries still participating, or have more people dropped out, where it's predominately Britain, Italy and a few others?

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Okay, got it, your point. Let me tell you, the NATO, as you, of course, will have known, are 26. In the NATO training mission are represented 17 -- one seven -- of the 26. But this doesn't mean that the remaining nine countries are not participating in the mission, because they are not footprinting in theater, but they are present with other solutions; for example, donations in terms of equipment, donations in terms of material, donations in terms of -- (inaudible) -- generally speaking, and this means that the NATO decided to accept the explicit request which was formulated to that.

It's enough as answer?

Q Yes, it is. Thank you very much.

MR. HOLT: Okay --

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. And we're just about out of time here.

Do you have any closing thoughts for us, a closing statement?

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Okay.

MR. : I think we've extended all rounds here, but Jack, thanks for the opportunity. This is kind of unique.

And General --

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Pompegnani.

MR. : General Pompegnani does have one last thing he wants to say. Hang on just a second.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

GEN. POMPEGNANI: That is the first time that I have to help another tongue indicating my language. (Laughter.) In my language -- (inaudible) -- sort of revenge from my side.

Mr. Jack, thank you very much indeed for your time, for your attention. And sorry for disturb you with my disgusting English.

Bye.

MR. HOLT: (Laughs.) Thank you very much --

MR. : Thank you, General.

MR. HOLT: -- General Pompegnani for joining us, and hopefully we can do this again. And I -- I apologize also for some of the technical difficulties we've been having here as well. But thank you very much.

Q And General, this is -- (audio break). Your English, sir, is far better than my Italian, so I appreciate the time.

GEN. POMPEGNANI: Okay.

Q Thank you, General.

GEN. POMPEGNANI: (Inaudible) -- his answer. Very polite. Thank you very much. Very kind of you.

MR. : Caio, General.

END.